



Using Peer Communication to Create an Early Detection Program

Public Health Problem

In 2002, an estimated 2,600 cases of invasive breast cancer and 100 cases of cervical cancer were reported in Connecticut; approximately 500 women died of breast cancer in Connecticut.

Evidence That Prevention Works

Interpersonal strategies, those that involve communication with a family member or a person in one's social network, are effective in promoting early detection and treatment of breast and cervical cancer. Using peers to encourage women to be screened for cancer may eliminate language barriers and can help a program better address cultural and community factors.

Program Example

Funded by CDC, Connecticut's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program focuses on providing screening services to the state's uninsured or underinsured older women who are from racial or ethnic minority groups. As of 2001, more than 18,000 of the state's uninsured, low-income women had received services through this program. This number represents 45% of the state's program-eligible population. Nearly 18% of these women are African American, and 20% are Hispanic. At enrollment, women receiving program services were asked how they heard about the program. Twenty-four percent (24%) of these women said that they heard about it through outreach educators who were members of the local community and employed by the Connecticut program to recruit women for screening services.

Implications

Without this program and the commitment and work of the outreach educators, these Connecticut women may not have received potentially lifesaving early detection services. This program emphasizes the importance of using peer communication as an effective way to reach underserved populations.

Contact Information

Connecticut Department of Public Health • Breast and Cervical Cancer Program
410 Capitol Avenue, MS# 11HLS • Hartford, Connecticut 06134-0308
Phone: (860) 509-7804 • Web site: www.dph.state.ct.us/BCH/HEI/bccedp_program_locations.htm